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National Community Despite Religious Difference

(Volksgemeinschaft trotz Religionsverschiedenheit)

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(This assessment of the religious-political situation is intended exclusively for Party comrades in leading positions and in important state offices.)

English translation from the German-language typescript.

Translator's interpolations appear in [square brackets].

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National Community Despite Religious Difference

(Completed 31 October 1941)

I) Personal Preface

The following remarks do not spring from concern for the fate of a denomination, but rather from concern that through various avoidable measures the spiritual resilience of a considerable portion of the German people is being weakened during the war and the German future is being endangered. These remarks are not addressed to the mass of Party and national comrades, for whom they would need to be written differently. Still less are they addressed to those who see in the doctrines and confessions of the Churches an eternally unshakeable foundation — they cannot be satisfied by the results of this document. Rather, this addresses itself exclusively to authoritative personalities in Party and State who are in a position to influence the course of events. It also serves to relieve the author of a burden of responsibility that has weighed upon him for a long time. I do not wish, in any case, to belong to those who, seeing a disaster coming, keep silent out of fear of personal inconveniences and fail to give warning — and who thereby, with regard to the Third Reich, take upon themselves the responsibility of those whom the Führer in *Mein Kampf*, p. 259, characterized as the gravediggers of the Monarchy.

Since the personal convictions of the author and his background are important for evaluating these remarks, I preface them with a few personal details.

I grew up in a strictly Evangelical household in the country, one that saw in Christianity above all the binding force between employer and workforce — in short, the foundation of the national community. My still-living mother and my closest relatives have remained faithful to this tradition, which was already handed down from earlier generations. This has given me personal acquaintance with the severe inner burden that the present handling of the Church question represents for those fellow nationals who are devoutly churchgoing — particularly when they are people of the best will.

Personally, I have for roughly thirty years no longer stood on the orthodox-ecclesiastical standpoint that was for many generations the unshakeable foundation of Evangelical faith and that the Confessional Front has made its own. I have had to form my views independently and feel inwardly free.

From its founding until its collapse in 1934, I was a member of the 'German Christians' movement, strongly promoted in my home Gau by the Gauleiter, and in 1933 was placed without my initiative on that movement's list for the Provincial Synod. I hoped from it a completion of the Reformation. After its failure in 1934, I considered it my duty as a National Socialist and a political civil servant to hold aloof from ecclesiastical and religious controversies, and have belonged to no church-political tendency or other faith movement — though I have sympathized with one. I have strictly adhered to the line of the years of struggle, where differences of religious confession played no role but receded behind the struggle for a great goal. I believe that by such an attitude I render the Party a better service than those who treat with malice or offense the things that are sacred to their comrades. (Cf. *Mein Kampf*, p. 632.)

II) Historical Review

In order to understand correctly the situation in which we find ourselves, we must start from how it came to be.

A) Developments before the Seizure of Power

Disputes between state powers and Churches are, politically speaking, struggles for authority; religiously speaking, they are struggles over questions of faith. The state as an administrative organization has never of itself led human beings — that was rather the task of spiritual powers encompassing the whole person, which in earlier times in Germany were the Churches. They determined the behavior of men right down to the smallest details. Gradually, however, the Churches weakened in their leadership function. The rising age of liberalism and Marxism considerably diminished their prestige, power, and significance and gradually displaced them from their dominant position, so that by 1932 we encountered institutions that, though still exercising power over souls by inertia of tradition and exerting some influence on political affairs, had in substance become internally alienated from considerable masses of the people and were no longer capable of a deep inner renewal that could re-encompass the entire nation. They had set out on the path toward sect-hood, leaving behind a chaos of the most varied worldviews and competing claims to authority. Shaken in particular were also the dogmatic foundations of the individual Churches, 'without which the practical existence of any religious belief in this world is unthinkable.' (*Mein Kampf*, p. 293.) This was — as historical truth requires it to be noted — not the consequence of National Socialist activity, but of the Jewish-liberal-Marxist work of corrosion and destruction!

B) Developments after the Seizure of Power

After the seizure of power, National Socialism — which likewise appeared with a total claim to leadership, and which by necessity sought to unify the inner renewal of the German people and concentrate all their forces — sought to establish an understanding with the Churches. This was only possible by permeating the Churches with National Socialism and attempting to bring about a condition in which a strengthening of the Churches would simultaneously mean a strengthening of National Socialist leadership. Practically speaking, the aim was a transformation of ecclesiastical leadership from within, for which the 'German Christians' movement was to serve as the shock-troop. In the case of the Catholic Church the situation was considerably more difficult than with the Evangelical Church, since the former is governed from outside — namely from the Pope in Rome. But even here, by means of the Concordat, the intention to 'get along' was demonstrated. The countless Evangelical regional churches and confessions were consolidated into a single Evangelical Reich Church, to give 'the longing of that era a genuine satisfaction, since in the fragmentation of Evangelical life they feared a weakening of the force of Evangelical faith itself' (the Führer on 30 January 1934 before the Reichstag). The atheist movements were crushed, the Tannenberg League banned, and those who had left the Churches were returned to them. In any case, there was a sincere desire to secure 'the great religious, moral, and ethical values anchored in both Christian confessions for the German people' (the Führer on 30 January 1933 before the Reichstag).

A penetration of the Churches did not succeed, nor even a pacification. The renewal movement found its impulse not in a religious need, but from the political side. It was consequently religiously unsatisfying for the devoutly faithful; its advocates attacked doctrines sacred to believers and displayed a damnable resemblance to the former Jewish-Marxist freethinking. A great deal of goodwill was destroyed. Attempts to arrive at a tolerable relationship continued for a longer period. Through the appointment of a minister for church affairs and the establishment of church committees, new paths were tried. In 1937 the Führer hoped through a church election to bring the Evangelical Church into a unified direction; it was abandoned because it proved impossible. The situation experienced no relaxation through the deployment of state power — especially political police — but became more acute. From the police measures, those ecclesiastical tendencies drew the greatest advantage that had been most affected and had most strongly resisted 'coordination' [*Gleichschaltung*]. They gained the upper hand within the Churches. It became evident that the passive resistance of the Churches against direct attacks on them or their faith had remained unexpectedly great, and that at the moment when the masses perceived an acute threat to their time-honored faith, a deep-felt attachment to it manifested itself — expressing itself in increased church attendance and the like. The core of the Churches' membership actually received an inner strengthening and outward growth. What was lost to them had already been lost to them anyway.

C) Principles Proclaimed by the Leading Men of Party and State Regarding the Treatment of Church and Religious Questions, 1935–1938

On the side of the Party, new paths were taken. One withdrew from the church struggle and dropped the faith movements previously supported. As early as 13 October 1933, the Deputy Führer, in the well-known tolerance decree, declared faith to be the most private affair of every individual, prohibited compulsion of conscience and discrimination on grounds of denominational adherence, and thereby rejected the Party's commitment to any specific religious conviction. Gradually the sub-leaders of the movement were forbidden from accepting offices in churches or faith communities or conspicuously engaging in them. Thereafter, the Party instituted a program of worldview guidance aimed at the closest possible cohesion and uniform alignment. Special emphasis was placed on the care of youth.

Freedom of conscience was repeatedly emphasized on every possible occasion by authoritative offices. The Führer declared at the opening of the Party Congress of 1935 in Nuremberg: 'The Party has neither earlier had, nor has it today, any intention of conducting any struggle against Christianity in Germany.' Still on 31 January 1939, the Führer assured that no one would be persecuted on account of his religious convictions.

Minister-President Göring established in a published fundamental decree of July 1935 that the National Socialist state guarantees the integrity of the Christian Churches and affords protection to their religious institutions, leaving the Churches the full freedom of their faith and teaching. Reich Minister for Church Affairs Kerrl declared in December 1937 that a genuine National Socialist is only one who recognizes his bond to God: 'National Socialism declares that whoever denies this bond is inferior and does not belong to us. But the National Socialist state has no intention of making any confession into a state church. Every person may choose his confession and follow his own heart. We demand, however, that he cultivate respect for what is sacred to others. Whoever violates this commandment of respect and reverence is no genuine National Socialist.'

Reichsleiter Rosenberg, entrusted in 1934 with the worldview leadership of the Party, declared in reply to Bishop Hudal: 'We were and remain of the conviction that the National Socialist worldview must be broad enough to encompass all those personalities and confessions who are sincerely willing to support the substance of German identity and all its blood-conditioned, character-related, and spiritual forces in the struggle against the currents of world-destruction.' He repeated this line in April 1938 in Cologne, and affirmed: 'We have proclaimed the principle of religious freedom of conscience and intend to uphold it.' That the worldview confession in his writings is personal and not binding for the Movement, Rosenberg explains in the foreword to his *Mythos*, 2nd ed., p. 26: he had no intention of wishing to detach

people from their faith, but only to cause those who had already departed from the old forms to engage more deeply with those problems.

These are the essential pronouncements of the leading men regarding the relationship to Churches and Christianity.

III) The Application of the Principles

Through a persistent application of these principles — which ultimately go back to Point 24 of the Party program — not only would the considerable tensions that have arisen have been mitigated in a manner particularly useful for the severe spiritual burdens the people are about to face, but they would also have led the people toward a new goal: unity of faith. Against these principles, however, there have been countless transgressions in practice, to which I will return later. First, however, I wish to address:

A) The ideal goal of a national-state policy — unity of faith — and the prospects for its near realization

The elimination of the religious divisions of the German people, the alignment of religious conviction and civic duty, would represent an incomparable source of strength for the German people in all the storms of history. It is therefore the object of the longing of many Germans that the call 'One People, One Reich, One Führer' might yet find its completion in the word 'one faith.'

But one would have learned nothing from the previous development of affairs if one were of the opinion that this goal can be achieved other than over long periods of time. A rapid imposition in the present would not be possible without the application of the most brutal violence and inquisitorial or Cheka-like methods, in which the men of firm character and loyal to their convictions would be the first to be eradicated and an unpleasant counter-selection made. Whoever is of a different opinion underestimates the adherents of the Christian Churches and has not learned from German history how seriously the German takes matters of faith. The fact that the strictly churchgoing portion of the population is keeping quiet out of national discipline during the war so as not to stab the Fatherland in the back does not yet allow the conclusion that it will let itself be dissuaded from its faith and its Church by any means of force. As the history of the Reformation shows, even in countries that had become purely Evangelical, the new teaching only fully prevailed after two generations had died out. The experiences from Soviet Russia show that twenty years of the bloodiest terror caused Christianity to disappear outwardly, but have not torn it from the hearts of the population. Moreover, even a violent suppression of the existing Churches would not yet constitute a

religious renewal — for that must find its impulse in religious dissatisfaction. One should also be reminded of the Führer's word that only fools and criminals can demolish what exists as long as a visibly better replacement is lacking (*Mein Kampf*, pp. 293–294). How fluid the boundary between 'God-belief' [*Gottgläubigkeit*] and godlessness is shown by the fact that a fellow national who described himself as 'gottgläubig,' when asked about his concept of God, pointed to what physics has for centuries called 'gravity.' Destroying what exists without any new religious bond would leave souls unstable, faithless, and cynical, and prepare the soil for Bolshevism.

B) Violations of the Proclaimed Principles as the Cause of the Present Critical Situation

As already stated, I believe that we would have arrived at a tolerable condition had the Party program and the publicly announced principles also been complied with. That they have not been complied with has led to that condition which I — along with many other Party comrades — regard with the gravest concern for the future of our people and its capacity for resistance in the war, and which has prompted me to write these remarks.

1) The growing deterioration of relations between State and Party on the one hand and the Churches on the other

No one can have failed to notice that in recent times the relationship between State and Party on the one hand and the Churches on the other has deteriorated.

a) The disqualification of the 'denominationally committed' and of pastors as politically unreliable

In Party circles, devout Evangelical and Catholic Christians are disqualified as 'denominationally bound' [*konfessionell gebunden*], without having given any other cause than that of being adherents of the Churches, to whom the protection of their religious activities had after all been guaranteed. Under the rubric of 'denominational commitment,' a particular circle of national comrades and Party members who, according to the Führer's own word, were able during the years of struggle to march in our movement without the slightest conflict of conscience (*Mein Kampf*, p. 632) are now suddenly stamped as politically unreliable Party or national comrades, regarded with corresponding mistrust, or even treated accordingly. Two concepts, 'denominational commitment' and 'political unreliability,' which the years of struggle demonstrated must not be equated, are being equated. The devout Catholic and Evangelical Christian is 'ideologically out of order' and experiences a corresponding demotion — one correctly guarded against with great care during the years of struggle. Those who suffer most bitterly are the pastors who were old fighters, who founded local groups, who in the years of struggle conducted hundreds of meetings or led storm detachments, but who now not only may

not hold Party offices, but run about as no longer fully valued, merely tolerated Party members. Their clerical colleagues find no acceptance in the Party and can count themselves fortunate if they are not mentioned in the same breath as Jews and Communists.

I have no wish to contest the Party's right to demand a subordination of denominational activity in favor of uniform ideological alignment from its members — already in the years of struggle we subordinated everything else to the struggle for a common goal! What I object to is that Party and national comrades are no longer regarded as fully valued and are being defamed, not because they themselves have changed, but because certain circles within the Party are deviating from the principles of the years of struggle and from the Party program's protection of the freedom of religious confession.

b) The disadvantaging of such Party and national comrades

It does not stop at disqualification; one proceeds increasingly to disadvantaging the 'denominationally committed.' Their adherence to the faith in which their parents raised them is not only an obstacle to their advancement — rights are increasingly denied to them that any national comrade who fulfills his duties is entitled to claim. This happens not only by the method of 'going through the back door,' but quite openly. The non-consideration of a woman national comrade in the distribution of scarce fodder ration cards was openly justified by her attitude toward the Church — while the fact that she had two sons at the front was left out of account. A pastor's wife was refused an exit permit to visit her parents in Holland, when in any comparable case the permit would have been granted without hesitation. The pastor's wife could not fail to notice that the permit was withheld from her solely because she was a pastor's wife — and this at a time when she was again about to become a mother. In examples of this kind, which can be multiplied at will, it becomes apparent that we are departing from the principle that no national comrade may be disadvantaged because he professes a particular faith. Our struggle should always have been directed only against those who endanger the existence of the state!

c) One-sided restriction of freedom of expression — violation of the duty of restraint

I am in no way advocating unlimited tolerance of speech and understand the reservations against a freedom of conscience granted without limits. Freedom of confession is already restricted by the Party program itself to those confessions that do not violate the existence of the state or the moral sense of the Germanic race. Beyond that, limits are placed on the Party comrade's religious activity in the interest of the internal cohesion of the Party. But insofar as the right of free expression in religious matters is granted, it ought to apply to all — including adherents of the Churches. And insofar as opinions are expressed, their private character should be more strongly emphasized — as Reichsleiter Rosenberg himself stresses in his writings —

and the impression should not be allowed to arise that these are official Party positions. In any case, speakers, administrative officers, and unit leaders must not attempt to commit the Party or one of its units to their personal attitudes.

In practice it is unfortunately now the case that anyone can say what he likes as long as it is directed against the Churches, and that innumerable statements in public have created the impression that the Party no longer stands above the confessions, and that the National Socialist worldview no longer forms the dome under which all confessions of good will are united, but has descended from that height into the religious quarrel and entered the struggle against the Churches and Christianity. And all this despite the fact that unrevoked words of the Führer and the statements of other authoritative men stand against it.

d) Measures directed against the Churches

Beyond this, measures accumulate that restrict the Churches' sphere of activity or are directed against their institutions. They involve interventions that appear avoidable, are poorly or occasionally cynically justified, and can be interpreted as nothing other than combat measures. In a sparsely populated area, a ban on the use of schools for worship services issued in the name of freedom of conscience made it altogether impossible for elderly people to attend a church service at all. That correspondence between clergymen and their parishioners in the field has been made more difficult, and church publications altogether forbidden, has been felt by many soldiers as a grievance. The problem of the religious upbringing of children has so far been resolved purely negatively — by the elimination of religious instruction in most schools. War-economic necessities must all too often serve as a pretext for drastic measures.

Anyone active in an official capacity can observe that the representatives of the Churches comply most willingly with factually justified measures that restrict them — especially war-related measures — when these are brought to them tactfully and with good grounds. Unfortunately, however, in many cases it must be noted that on our side the effort of a factual justification is not even undertaken; on the contrary, contempt for the worthlessness of the ecclesiastical institution to be abolished is expressed in a manner that simply cannot be anything but wounding.

As an example I cite a case from 1938: the prohibition of a coffee gathering at the meeting of a congregation following a church service. I stated at the time: 'Even at the most dreary gathering in the most oppressed mood, a police intervention of this kind would in those days have guaranteed us a full success... We even provoked such interventions with pleasure. Whoever, lacking active engagement in the years of struggle, has not had such experiences, should at least learn from the Führer's remarks in *Mein Kampf* on the limits of the use of police

force that such measures bring about precisely the opposite of what is desired.'

e) The attitude toward Christianity

aa) The growing departure from Christianity

We come here to the second principle of the Party program, which has in practice been set aside — namely the principle that the Party as such represents the standpoint of a positive Christianity. Christianity — still characterized by the Führer in 1933 as 'the basis of our entire morality' (Proclamation of the Reich Government, 1 February 1933) or as 'the unshakeable foundation of the moral and ethical life of the people' (Speech before the Reichstag, 23 March 1933) — is now officially silenced, and in part fanatically combated. Everything in public life that has to do with Christianity is being eradicated — Christian holidays, old customs, baptism, church marriage, church burial. Even the Cross that adorns the graves of our ancestors and the fallen of the World War seems not to be spared. National Socialist and Christian worldviews are presented at Party training sessions as irreconcilable opposites; one demands, with reference to pp. 506–507 of *Mein Kampf*, that the consequence of departure from Christianity be drawn — despite the fact that the Führer declared at the Nuremberg Party Congress of 1935, as yet unrevoked: 'The Party has neither earlier had, nor today has, any intention of conducting any struggle against Christianity in Germany.'

Given that one chose the word 'Christianity' in the Party program, one cannot make the attempt to get rid of it again by invoking an exclusive authority of interpretation and claiming that what one is doing is simply 'positive Christianity.' The official position of the Party cannot be anything other than a Christian one — one that refers to Christ!

bb) Critique of a particular manifestation of the departure from Christianity

In this connection I come to a measure that is not in itself of great significance but shows how easily one can find oneself on a false track. For some time, historical dating has replaced 'before/after the birth of Christ' with 'before/after the turning of the era.' Whoever uses the new designation will not be able to escape the question of what event was so momentous that a new calendar is dated from it. He will not be able to keep silent about this event — which also explains why this measure raises hardly outrage in Christian circles but a smile. Should it not, in this time that will one day be ranked among the greatest epochs of world history, be rather a petty trait to suppress the memory of a personality whose influence and teaching is inseparable from the history of our people and from world history? One should therefore, when speaking of the year 1933, calmly acknowledge that it is the year 1933 after the birth of Christ.

2) Confrontation with objections against the Churches and Christianity that are supposed to justify struggle against them

Given the principles proclaimed by the Führer and the authoritative men of the Party, struggle against the Churches is altogether incompatible with them. It is therefore necessary to examine whether the Churches themselves have given cause for such a change in attitude toward them.

a) Is intolerance justified because the Churches fail to meet the requirements of the Party program, or because Church adherents are from the outset opposed to the National Socialist state?

The objection is frequently made that the Churches fail to meet the requirements of the Party program and that their adherents are state-hostile. Yet still in 1933 the Führer saw 'in the two Christian confessions the most important factors for the preservation of our national identity' (Speech of 23 March 1933 before the Reichstag). Although the Führer's hopes may have been disappointed — and not solely through the fault of the Churches — no fundamental change has occurred that would justify a complete reversal from support to combat. Or when did it occur? It was never proclaimed from authoritative quarters and probably does not lie in the Führer's will either. What is persistently declared to be state-dangerous will of course become state-dangerous, even if it originally was not or did not wish to be. And it is precisely in the pushing of the Churches into an opposition stance that the danger of the conditions I have described lies.

It should be noted that untruth is spreading as an atmosphere-poisoning force. It is a widespread bad habit to draw caricatures of ecclesiastical teachings and practices in order then to attack them indiscriminately. False reports are spread with seeming recklessness as long as something unfavorable about the attitude of Church representatives can be alleged. Conversely, the person who reports the plain truth here runs the risk of being denounced as politically unreliable. It cannot end well when the authoritative offices are constantly receiving false information. False premises lead to false measures.

Of decisive importance is the question: where in the World War or in this war has the experience been made that the 'denominationally committed' national comrades fought worse or threw themselves in less than the others? In the World War, the disproportionately large number of fallen Evangelical theologians attests to the contrary; and this time, in the case of soldiers placed in the most severe of all inner conflicts, the observation of a failure has surely not been made. The readiness for deployment of the devoutly faithful despite severe spiritual trials is the most irrefutable proof of their loyalty to the Reich.

b) Is Christianity alien to the German species?

In various formulations, Christianity is blamed for an alien-species (Jewish) poisoning of the national soul. In *Mein Kampf*, p. 336, the Führer says that the Jewish spirit is internally as foreign to true Christianity as its nature was, two thousand years earlier, to the great founder of the new teaching himself. Alongside Rosenberg's statement about 'extremely anti-Jewish Christianity,' the late Gauleiter Hans Schemm stated: 'I believe that the path then taken in the Christian sense could not have embedded itself so deeply in Germany if the religious sensibility, worldview, and yearning for God had not been so gloriously deep-rooted in the German person... There exists an inner affinity of essence between Christianity and the Germanic.'

Finally, in the past, great men — of whom Bismarck and Frederick William I are the best known — professed Christianity without damage to their souls.

c) Is Christianity unscientific?

It is frequently alleged that the dogmas contradict the results of exact scientific research. To those who derive from this a justification for struggle against Christianity, it must be replied that this was not just now discovered — the liberal epoch before the World War was already proud of this discovery, equating faith with narrow-mindedness and stupidity. We ought to have transcended that view, having known and experienced the 'victory of faith,' and having learned that such forces are not subject to rational-intellectual criticism but must be experienced as mountain-moving irrational powers with which flat-footed enlightenment does not know what to do.

d) The universalism of Christianity

Christianity arose in a time when the national states had declined and been absorbed into the Roman Empire, which faced the task of holding together entirely heterogeneous masses and giving them state order and peace. In this time, when ethnic boundaries were becoming blurred, Christianity showed universalist features. But the temporal garments in which a religion dresses itself — one that has endured for millennia — are not a necessary component of it and can be laid aside without harm. The unfamiliarity with the laws of race and blood is also no specifically Christian phenomenon, but a general phenomenon of the period before the appearance of the National Socialist idea. Christianity in its Evangelical form has already received a national-state character. A healthy further development would surely be preferable to a complete break with the past that would bring serious dangers for our people, for the selection of leaders, and for the continued existence of the Party, without any necessity!

e) The Catholic Church as a supranational power

The most serious objection — which applies only to the Catholic Church — is that which can be raised against its leadership from outside the national state, namely by the Papacy in Rome. During the years of struggle, the Führer did not see the danger as so great that the struggle against the Church itself had to be declared, and separated himself from the German-nationalist movement on these grounds (*Mein Kampf*, p. 633). After the seizure of power, he concluded the Concordat with the Holy See — 'resolved to regulate the relationship between the Catholic Church and the state on a permanent basis satisfying to both parties' (Preamble, 12 September 1933). The Concordat still exists today and obligates us to act in its spirit.

For the rest, the struggle against Ultramontanism should be conducted politically, in accordance with the proven principles of the years of struggle — against political Catholicism, not on the religious level. We retained confidence in our political striking power then; we should retain it now. A consistent political education will be able to banish the dangers of Ultramontanism and Separatism.

3) The Effects of Anti-Church and Anti-Christian Measures

a) Their Failures

As the immediate repercussion of all these phenomena, a nameless agitation in wide circles of the population — increasing again in recent months — is making itself felt, met on our side with a lack of comprehension that continually astonishes me. The first result of this agitation, dampened by the strong national discipline of the population, is an inner strengthening of the Churches — a success that one has surely not intended. Countless Evangelical and Catholic national comrades have not been won over but pushed back into the arms of the Churches. The very portion that should have been won — the well-intentioned part — is being exposed to the severest inner conflicts. The advantage goes to the ill-disposed part. In this way a disposition is made malicious that was not so previously. Antagonisms are thus torn open that did not previously exist. These antagonisms have a tendency toward ever-further intensification, for attack and counterattack generate further tensions. It ends either in a bloodbath or in a retreat coupled with an enormous loss of prestige.

Those who believe they must unleash a struggle against the Churches should learn especially from their failures. The stream of applicants for theological study has barely diminished; the young people who enter this calling today do so with full conviction and have been hardened by many an ordeal. The success of the church-departure propaganda is minimal, and the measures taken are in part excellently suited to winning for the Churches the sympathies of further circles of the population. The sense of justice in the German people will

not be eradicated. We do well, on the contrary, to cultivate it — it is a community-forming force.

b) Endangering the Fighting Community of the German People in the War

In wartime one should above all keep in mind that everything is to be subordinated that is detrimental to the one goal: the winning of victory. To what a monstrous spiritual burden is the church-loyal population being subjected? What must the inner world of a man look like who gladly wishes to commit himself for his Fatherland and must have the experience that this Fatherland wishes to take from him what is sacred to him? Faithful, decent people who wish to fight with full commitment for the future of Greater Germany are kept from despair only because they instinctively feel and believe that the Führer is not in agreement with all of this, and harbor the hope that he — when he once has the time — will set things thoroughly to rights!

Whoever consciously or carelessly creates or exacerbates artificial antagonisms between Party and State on the one hand, and Church and Christianity on the other, bears the gravest responsibility before the future of the Greater German Reich. He disturbs the fighting community of the German people in wartime! The Führer therefore made known to us in August 1940 that he 'wishes to avoid all measures not absolutely necessary that could worsen the relationship of State and Party to the Church.' There is no occasion whatsoever to throw overboard the proven principles of the years of struggle. What applied then for the unity of the Party applies today for the unity of the German people.

4) Proposals for Resolving the Difficulties That Have Arisen

a) Tolerance — a Germanic and National Socialist Virtue

From what has been set forth above, it appears neither politically expedient nor is there any compelling reason to abandon the principle of tolerance, to enter into struggle with the Churches, or to persecute their adherents. The Party should adhere to the principle that Reichsleiter Rosenberg proclaimed in the *Völkischer Beobachter* of 18 February 1933:

> 'Just as little as the political party may be an instrument for founders of religions, it can become the tool of existing confessions in their intellectual disputes. This is not a return to liberalism, but a return to an old Germanic virtue: the religious freedom of thought, for which Europe fought and bled for centuries in order to restore this once-lost character-virtue.'

Moreover, in National Socialist writing, the Reformation of Martin Luther is celebrated as a breakthrough of Germanic intellectual freedom. On this foundation was built the Prussian

state — a state of wonderful inner solidarity and vigor. Soldatische Haltung [a soldierly bearing] suits the German blood better than intolerant zealotry. We have moved far from the line of the years of struggle, where the most devout Protestant could sit beside the most devout Catholic without ever coming into the slightest conflict of conscience over his religious conviction (cf. *Mein Kampf*, p. 632).

b) The possibility of adapting time- and circumstance-conditioned Church teachings to the requirements of the present age

The fact that liberal and Marxist corrosion has already shaken the authority of ecclesiastical dogmas does not make the task insoluble: that of revising the Churches' teachings, institutions, and customs with the aim of adapting the articles of faith to the contemporary worldview. These disputes can, however, be conducted under complete neutrality of State and Party. The deployment of state power leads to a defensive reaction that needlessly prolongs the process. One will prevail and convince here most readily through the means of clean intellectual disputation. Nor will any serious person be able to avoid the problems of guilt, atonement, redemption, compensating justice, and life after death — since they are rooted in the unchanging human nature and its religious needs. 'Times change, but man always remains the same!' says Goethe. Besser täte man in unseren Kreisen, wenn über diese Probleme nicht ganz so oberflächlich gesprochen würde, wie dies Mode geworden ist [Better would it be in our circles if these problems were not discussed quite so superficially as has become the fashion].

c) Reverence and respect for firm character ensure a sound selection

What also frequently makes itself noticed is a lack of respect for the conviction of others. What does it say about the character of a person who demands of another an instantaneous change of stance, or abruptly calls upon a devout national comrade to leave the Church forthwith? Only opportunists, shallow people, or those who believe in nothing can be expected to undergo such a sudden change of conviction.

The results of superficial or forced conversion measures are not pleasing — they constitute a highly unpleasant counter-selection. The element of firm character, in whom conviction is more deeply rooted and without whose steadfast strength the enduring existence of a state is inconceivable, is being driven into opposition. In its place swells the influx of those who sacrifice their conviction for external advantages or out of fear. Finally, a repulsive hypocrisy is being cultivated. One would do well, as in nature, to let the fruit ripen before picking it. Such a sudden change of conviction should not be imposed on us! The Germanic concept of *Gefolgschaft* [following] allows room for firmness of character; Germanic loyalty presupposes trust — i.e., the inner certainty that the one to whom one is devoted does and

refrains from certain things, and is not capable of unbounded arbitrary action.

d) Rule of law as the foundation of trust in state leadership

I thus come to the trust that is the precondition of loyalty — not of obedience. It is the contempt for legality and the resulting immoderation in the application of state power that also in other respects endangers the continued existence of the Reich. That one at many posts no longer considers oneself bound by the Party program or the utterances of the Führer has been sufficiently demonstrated. Equally, the constraints imposed by laws and legal regulations — even when they bear the Führer's signature — are felt as a nuisance at many posts. Their precise application is denounced as 'paragraph-riding'; the official who applies them with incorruptible objectivity is branded a hidebound bureaucrat. 'Right is what benefits the people, wrong is what harms them.' And in doing so one forgets that it is not arbitrary will that benefits the people!

Rule of law means that the holders of state power feel bound by the laws in all but the rarest cases of emergency. 'Security of law is the foundation of the national community' (Hermann Göring). Not for nothing has the myth of the miller of Sanssouci penetrated so deeply into the national consciousness — its power rests on the fact that the great king, even as an absolute monarch, recognized a legal order above himself and submitted to it. Unbounded arbitrary will is also foreign to the Führer; he subordinates himself to an idea and to the laws of life of the nation.

We will never make moral conquests if we do not provide the firm guarantee that we adhere to certain self-imposed limits and are reliable. Among our domestic political opponents, as among the peoples we have defeated, inner submission will never follow outer submission if we set no limits to arbitrary will. A strong state can, by overstretching the deployment of its means of power, decisively weaken itself in the very moment of inner and outer danger. It cannot be the task of a state police to multiply the number of state enemies; rather, to render the state's enemies harmless.

e) Warning against some further errors

We should not make things so easy for ourselves, but think more of the years of struggle and reflect on the means with which we made an impression on the people then. We should know that the worst propaganda is the kind no one believes anymore. We should educate responsible-minded National Socialists and not thoughtless instruments of every erroneous and self-serving action. We should not allow independent characters to be displaced by petty and narrow spirits.

We should not so heedlessly place in question the moral and cultural foundations and institutions of our national life — respect for human life, for marriage, and for property. The broad mass has only the feeling that nothing is sacred anymore, and that the differences from Bolshevism are gradually blurring. A people cannot in the long run be governed if certain principles are not withdrawn from any discussion as unshakeable and held sacred. The harm done abroad through such errors is also immeasurable.

Among the errors I wish to single out one: the propaganda in favor of the illegitimate child, which ultimately must work against the institution of marriage. Bolshevism fought marriage and family life because both root the living generation in the past. We National Socialists, however, see in these precisely values to be cultivated, since they belong to the fundamental materials from which the building of the Third Reich is to derive its particular firmness and durability. Encouraging the illegitimate child is difficult to reconcile with the goal of securing for the institutions of marriage and family the standing that befits them as foundations of the life of the nation. If it was the Churches that previously confronted this social evil firmly, this should be recognized as a service to the national community in the struggle against corrosive individualistic impulses — not denounced with liberal slogans of 'clericalism.'

IV) Concluding Reflection

Returning to the actual subject of this document, I declare that while it is admittedly not advisable to strengthen the Churches as long as it remains doubtful whether they can meet the demands of all-encompassing people's churches, I regard it as a disastrous game with the future of our people when antagonisms between Party and Church, between National Socialism and Christianity, are artificially created or further torn open! Things must not be driven to the point where ecclesiastical activity — however intensive — is already viewed as dangerous to the existence of the state in itself.

Why the Christian foundation of the Party anchored in the Party program is apparently being abandoned — what political necessities compel this — is inexplicable to me. I am also not aware that the Führer has given the signal for this course change that is actually taking hold in the Party. The shaking of trust in unshakeable program clauses, and the radical break with the past and the faith of our fathers, are of such momentous significance — and represent such an enormous burden on the domestic and foreign-policy situation — that one truly no longer knows whether reason still governs here or whether irresponsible forces are at work that no longer know what they are doing.

Christianity has become not only an inner-German but also a European problem. Alfred Rosenberg surely had this European significance in mind when he declared in *Wesen, Grundsätze und Ziele der NSDAP* [The Nature, Principles, and Goals of the NSDAP]:

> 'The history of Europe has proved that in this extremely anti-Jewish Christianity it found a religious form that, despite confessional differences, has become and remained the foundation for the religious life of the great overwhelming majority of the German people as well.'

Does one wish, by combating Christianity, to make it into the founding idea of a European conspiracy against the leadership of National Socialist Germany? Does one wish to create the seeds of corrosion and a burden for the eternal Reich by making its relationship to Christianity intolerable? Have the successes of the first eight years of National Socialist governance made us so megalomaniacal that we become blind to all dangers? With religious antagonisms one cannot trifle — least of all in Germany, and equally little in Europe. The future will show who the laughing third party is!

I do wish, however, to see avoided the danger that — solely for reasons of faith, or out of an admirable feeling of loyalty and firmness of character — valuable German people are needlessly alienated from the state (rather, they are to be led *toward* it!) and that things take a development in which the application of the most brutal, perhaps inquisitorial, means becomes necessary as a last resort. Finally, the attentive observer can hardly fail to notice that the sharp confrontation against the Churches and Christianity unleashes forces that sometimes bear a strong resemblance to the godless Marxist freethinking — destructive spirits that one surely does not wish to summon. I believe I must warn against the workings of purely negative forces, and would wish to see applied, as the measure of National Socialist conviction, a minimum sense of respect for the genuine religious conviction of the national comrade, and above all love of truth in all necessary disputes. These properties promote the inner cohesion and the striking power of the Party substantially more than compulsion of conscience.

'National community despite religious difference' [*Volksgenossenschaft trotz Religionsverschiedenheit*] is the watchword — proclaimed, incidentally, by a non-Christian, Party Comrade Count von Reventlow, in the *Reichswart* of 13 January 1938 — that can alone create tolerable conditions in the present situation and keeps open all possibilities for the future that should bring us unity of faith. When one wishes to conveniently dismiss my remarks with the catchphrase 'denominational commitment,' I reply with Goethe's words: 'For just where concepts are lacking, a word steps in at the right moment!' What I wrote, I wrote for the Party.

The Party is the fate of the German Reich. On it depends whether the German people will have a future or not. Its errors will become its doom. Whoever is thoroughly convinced of this view can only combat the errors with all his strength. The errors that one is about to commit I have described in broad outline. We find ourselves in a fateful development! It is time that those forces which wish to throw themselves against this fateful development gather and make themselves felt. The Führer himself directed the call to us in his speech of 3 October 1941, when he said:

> 'I will one day return from this war with my old Party program, whose fulfillment now seems to me even more important than perhaps on the first day!'

But to this Party program belongs also Point 24, which we intend to uphold.

— End of Document —

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